

Censors of Iranian Press Materials During Constitution Movement 1905- 1907

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Introduction

The Iranian migrants who had said, "inside our country, we do not dare to speak up and in our own land, in spite our cries, no body came to our rescue" became skillful in the company of Russian revolutionaries and liberals. The share of Russian social democrats, particularly Caucasian Bolsheviks, in informing Iranian migrants and labors and encouraging them to fight against dictatorship and social injustice could not be denied. Thus, certainly, formation of Iranian constitution revolution could not be studied far from their role. The migrated Iranian political groups in the Central Asia, Caucasian and Baku that led to the establishment of the first central parts of social democracy of Iran could gain experiences along with the Russian social democrats in its rapid growth and even found a chance to take part in their political struggle. The interesting point in this company is the final activities of social democrats in sending the press materials, Bolsheviks and Iskeras to Baku from Europe (Berlin, Vienna and Tabriz).

The letter which is written by Kropeskaya, Lenin's wife to in-charge of this task in Haji Tarkhan (Hashtarkhan) from Swiss in May 1901 reveals the initiation of a cooperation in this political struggle:

"Four parcels have been sent via Iran. Please let me know of it. What is the speed of carrying press materials? This is important for us so we may know if this way is good to send Iskara as well or if only pamphlets could be carried via this way (Tabriz)...."

The Bolshevik social democrats taught many experiences to the Iranian workers and inspired them in their liberal political smuggles in Iran. Studying the pioneer ideas and distributing them among people of North Iran were among their enlightening activities inside the Iranian borders.

This group formed almost five % of total labors of organizations, industrial installations of Trans-Caucasian and 50 % of oil labors in Baku who took part in the political and proletarian struggles of these zones. Political figures such as Heydarkhan Amuoghlu, the Leader of Iranian Communist Party was one of the political characters coming out of this group.

The valuable role of Iranian social democrats in Czarian Russia doubled in the beginning of Constitution revolution. It was in that time that due to large demonstrations at Baku oil industries and collective discharge of labors, large groups of Iranian migrants were forced to leave their work and return to Iran, bringing with them a large amount of freedom and liberal thoughts and ideas. The results of their journey became a stable support for constitution national movement. After gaining many revolutionary experiences and knowing the social best interests and rights, followed the message of the liberal journalist, Jalil Mohammad Gholizadeh, the editor of Mulla Nassreddin Journal.

It should be noted that Mulla Nassreddin was the most famous and popular of these press materials. Of the journals and press materials of that time one may mention "Foje Davat, Karegar Baku), a revolutionary press, and " Ershad, Nejat, Eqbal, Seda, Doghure, Ishigh, Helal, Tooti, Bohlul, Taraghi, Babai Amir,..." were among the moderate newspapers of that time and place.

The clear and obvious effect of Russia's revolution in 1905 on Iran was known for the British officials in as much that in his routine reports to Sir Edward Grey, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of British, Spring Rice, the British Minister in Tehran, writes: You may observe serious similarities between Russian and Iranian reformist movements, a kind of lack of leadership, an intrinsic hatred, secret operations,...However, fundamental difference between the two countries is that Iranian government has neither an army, nor money or resisting forces,...you may study willful attacks to the Russian government, Caucasian brigade and aggressive Russian consolders here. Moreover, exchanging friendship telegraphs between Russian Doma and Iranian parliament, under title of "freedom, justice and equality of people" may attract your attention. Therefore, it might not be strange to see the governments of both countries take common measures against their common enemies (liberals and radicals).....".

In reality, the effect of historical events in the social psychology of Iran by no mean could be ignored. Mirza Hosseinali Shirazi's Mikadonameh poem collection and the History of Russians Rebels were translated into Persian immediately upon publication and this is the sign of people's consciousness regarding those two historical events were the former wrote an account of a battle that would contain "motives of movement and lessons to be learned" and the latter was the history of a nation's fight in reaching freedom...".

In all events, these factors, together with the development of ideological movements in Turkey, flourish of industrial revolution in Europe, reflection of other foreign events along with inner factors and the explosive conditions of the

country grew the seed of constitution thought in the depth of Iranian society.

A quick glance to these factors would reject the idea of those who believed constitutional movement had been a scenario made by Britain and free and national press as puppets of that policy. Those who claim this failed in admitting the share of people and social-economic conditions as well as the role of liberals and intellectuals of modern ideas in the historical movements.

This group try to keep society within the framework of a historically dead system and reject any innovation and mental, social and economic changes. They ignore people's role and call the leaders of constitution revolution and those who fought for democracy and freedom as puppets of British embassy and xenophiles. "...this view is totally false and does not match the fact of Iranians' self sacrifice, particularly during the Second Constitution and after artillery firing to the parliament and ratifying highly advanced laws as well as supplementary to the Constitution- which in fact was too heavy to handle. Certainly, none of these would be for the best interest of British Imperialism in as much that ruling class prevented their execution and the Iranian nation had always reclaimed these ignored laws..."

It should be noted that the antagonism between the interests of Russian and British imperialism had made choosing one of them inevitable. Although both powers were only after more dominance and stronger footsteps in the country, until establishment of a "dominance balance" the policy of both colonialist countries forced one of them (Tsarian Russia) to follow its interests by using military force and clear support of the corrupted court and dictator government while the other (Britain) showed an artificial support and a tactical and temporary approval of constitution struggles. The Russian and British Treaty in 1907 for dividing Iran and continuation of Britain's aggression in Iranian territory. After the Socialist revolution in Soviet Union and imposing Treaty 1919 to Iran by that government shows that the initial side taking of both Imperialist countries required an immediate compromise to prevent an expansion and penetration of revolution in other subordinate countries and it seemed necessary to raise the issue of Iran to lower the war of power and maintain both government's influence in their colonies. However, with respect to the obvious difference between the policy adopted by Britain Imperialism and the dictatorship nature of Russian Tsars "...signs of Britain's diplomatic efforts could in religious classifications and in some instances, show off in mosques and religious gatherings and demagoguery of pioneers of freedom that suggested that country's intention to make use of Constitution Movement in Iran; however, one could not accept that will of Britain could be the factor of constitution revolution in Iran and in those time, the Imperialists' desires had raised storms in political environment of countries. The Tsar of Russia was trying to find a path to the Persian Gulf, the passage of India and Britain was trying to prevent Russians in having access to south. The Qajar court was mostly influenced by the Russians who were willing to keep the situation in the way it was while Britain desired to decrease the Russian's power in Iran through making changes in the situation and in turn, increase their own influence. Most naturally, the dictatorship Russia could not agree with the claim of liberty in Iran and the eastern dictatorship court had found Qajar more suitable to fulfill its plans. On the other hand, the Britain's diplomacy showed a face of supporting the opponents. In this way, to control Russian's influence in Iran, which had been started by Turkmanchi Treaty and had been extending since them, the Government of Britain had made a secret unity with a group of Iranian liberals.

Nevertheless, in its basis, Iranian constitution movement was a product of enlighten of thoughts and development of bourgeois class in Iran and grew in the light of endeavors of brave people. Most constitutionalists were honorable and noble men with strong beliefs and pure and clean histories who wished to benefit from suitable condition in that section of history to save their nation. The words Land, Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood were uttered mostly by revolutionaries. However, very soon, the compromise and set up of Britain and Russian removed the curtains and showed the ugly face of Britain's democracy and the Iranian nation found a chance to see the truth and becoming conscious of the realities hidden beyond the concerns showed by that old colonialist...."

A review on foreign journals and works published in Europe and Asia during 1905 and 1907 shows the fact that the development and growth of constitution and parliamentary government in Iran was an interesting topic for many nations and states around the country. The comments, articles and papers on the first few years of constitution movement; in sum, speak of the speed of changes and development, planning, resistances and struggles against the reactionaries and the domestic and foreign pressures and report of world's astonishment of such a revolution and explosion in "Iranian dictatorship stricken land" .

According to our knowledge on the difficulties of constitution revolution, now we can study the worthy place of press materials in the beginning of Constitution and review the role of free and national newspapers in proceeding the movement's goals through an academic and rational view.

The Constitution Decree which was issued as a result of a series of internal and external factors changed the political and social atmosphere of the country along with the mass media and journalism system of the country.

Literature in Constitution period was a cultural change that despite courtiers, clergymen and noblemen's elaborate passages, talked of freedom, liberty, social democracy, knowledge and progress of the country with simple words with no artificial literary techniques, criticizing cruelty, discrimination, blind ambition and injustice.

The Constitution literature and its first pillars were developed during Nassereddin Shah's absolute dictatorship and proceeded through intellectuals such as Seyed Jameddin Assadabadi, Mirza Melkamkhan, Talbov, Akhundzadeh, Mirza Agha Tabrizi, Haj Zeinolabedin Maraghehi, Sheikh Ruhi, Mirza Habib Isfahani,...

The major and important characteristics of constitution literature, compared to other literary and cultural ages of Iran is its moving beyond books and passages and aggregating inside pages of newspapers and pamphlets of constitution period. In another word, the constitution literature could be found more in the free and newly born press materials of constitution than books.

From the beginning of victory of movement and issuance of constitution, when the penmen's struggle had been limited to the scene of free press, the liberals and journalists were experiencing undesirable situations; for, the printing equipment and papers as well as any tools were possessed by the state men and dictators. Although propagations and struggles of liberals were done with difficulty; they were focused in newspapers and in this way, the literature of revolution was limited to the framework of the journals, as the only propagation tool in as much that one say that during this period, almost no independent book or passages had been published.

During the two months of interval between constitution decree and opening the first course of National Assembly (Parliament), the press materials and inspecting them kept its dictatorship situation.

The only significant changes occurred in publishing atmosphere was secret printing and distribution of night pamphlets which could be found everywhere. This was in fact continuation of a movement which had started in the mid-era of Nassreddin Shah's dictatorship and reached its peak during months of fight and struggle of constitution warriors to awaken people and improve their knowledge. The most regular and famous of these night-papers was a journal which had been published by Seyed Mohammad Reza Shirazi, the editor of Mosavat intellectual and radical newspaper. There was also a morning letter with the motto of "Liberty, Justice, Equality" which had named its distribution place as "The Alley of Justice Seekers, House of Free Nation" and the price of each edition was as follows:

For Tehran, zealous and ardor

Tabriz: Removal of injustice and meanness

Shiraz: Unity, collection

Isfahan: Abandoning the sleep of unawareness

Khorasan: Giving up opium

Kerman: Gaining generosity

Although some researchers and historians believed continuation of evening letters after Constitution decree to be a useless and unwise act; however, it seems more reasonable that those who had been awakened and writers who could not publish their ideas and thoughts with freedom due to the interfere of Ministry of Press and Censor had no way than making use of evening letters and secret notices. On the other hand, the efforts and interests shown in publishing evening letters led to confrontation of thoughts and expansion of challenges as well as improvement in the reading attitude and dynamism. A matter which had not been able to manifest itself during long years of dictatorship and censor. Also, people had grown brevity enough to write what they had in mind despite the past political strangulation. These changes were suitable ground to expand the only mass media of that time; the free and challenging press in the feverish political atmosphere of the future.

In one of the morning letters, it had been written:

You, the Regent, you, Zelolsoltan who have turned to various feasts and lusts of world because of the God-given gift of Iran, what is happening to you that do not question on the widowswho sell their women ornaments and tools and pay money to your banks, why you say no word of this....."

It should be noted that the thirteenth chapter of Constitution Law of Iran had discussed press and the activities of journalists and for the first time, the liberty in expression and writings were respected or the Iranian. The same principal had strongly rejected censor of the government in press by emphasizing on the point that "There should be no single affair kept secret and it could not be kept covert from public". By these words, Article 13 of the Constitution was the evidence of freedom of journalism, mass media and illegitimacy and illegality of censor: "The negotiations of the National Parliament should be in public so it could be executed on its time. According to the association memorandum of the Majles, the journalists and visitors have rights to appear in Majles and hear the speeches; however, they will have no right to make any lecture or speech. The journals and newspapers are allowed to publish all negotiations of the Majles without making any changes in the words or meaning so people would know the negotiations and details of reports. Any Iranian who believes in the best interest of his country is aware that the newspapers should not be deprived from state affairs; thus, as long as newspapers do not publish articles which are against the basis of the state and nation are entitled to publish useful materials for the public and if they publish any articles which would be for their own benefit or put false accusation to others or proceed otherwise that what stipulated here, they will be legally responsible and will be subject to legal trial."

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By establishment of the Constitution's justice movement, the importance of a suitable press system to publish its messages was manifested more and the freedom of writing and expression became of the most essential demands of people. Although, wherever there was any word of justice, equality, democracy and democracy, there were evening letters and publications of exiled Iranian. There was no hesitate in finding them and the paper would go around like a piece of gold.

Awarding the permit for publishing Majles Newspaper and printing the word "Free (not dependent)" on it was the first step of constitutionalists and journalists in abolishing government's supervision and censor on press materials and was a promising factor for putting more pressures to the court and government by warriors of liberty to close the professional and expert censor organization of the Ministry of Press.

Obtaining the privilege of publishing a free newspaper and emphasizing on "publishing any useful articles.....with a free and honored writing.." was a good start to found a free press system away from censor and governmental inspection. The editors of Majles Newspaper honored this characteristics so much and once in a while, recalled it among pages of Majles Newspaper to attribute the royal handwriting and give good news of end of the Ministry of Press to warn it from making attempts for further interfere and censor and at the same time, use it as a weapon to prevent it from any consequent problems of publishing awakening materials: "A group of nation favored publishing this type of articles and could obtain from the government the privilege to publish a newspaper under the condition of freedom of writing- named Majles."

By publishing the "...absolutely free" Newspaper " which had found maximum importance in that time" the opponents of Constitution and supporters of dictatorship of court and government did their best to prevent development of similar journals and their use of freedom in speech. They witnessed publication of the first free and legal newspaper by people and believed it would be a factor in removing the nation's fear of the ministers and authorities as more awakening and govern of people. Emphasis on the independence and freedom of the newspaper lied on two factors: first, by publishing this point, the newspaper would be separated from the official and governmental press and would take positions against the chosen articles of those journals and second, it would attract constitutionalists and justice seekers towards newspaper and would find suitable popular support. As an example, before Majdoleslam's effort in obtaining a credit consisting freedom of the mentioned newspaper- although due to his long record of journalism and struggle against Einoldoleh and exile of Kalat, he could obtain permit of publishing Neda-e- Vatan newspaper after Majles Newspaper, "despite his efforts to have the word "Free" in the permit letter, it did not happen..." . A passage of article of a morning letter in 1907 which discussed open space of that time writes:

You the Minister of Press!what is the nation's fault that should be kept in captivity of dictatorship and the newspapers in the chains and threat of being closed?.....Truly, you the Minister, why act as the barrier to the science and harm it?"

Upon resignation of Moshiroldoleh, Prime Minister, the way was paved for establishment of the first legal cabinet. Tabriz Society and National Parliament found eight ministries sufficient to run the country and despite the thirty-fourty years of background, the Ministry of Press was dissolved and the Minister of Science and Knowledge became responsible for the part of its duties which were limited to investigation to the printing affairs and governmental newspapers, issuance of credits and press offences.

On March 20, 1908, the ministers of eight ministries were introduced to the Parliament and Mokhberolsaltaneh undertook the responsibilities of press materials within the framework of his own ministry. Many newspapers were published and the pages of newspapers were free markets of the ideas and writings of known and unknown people. Valuable newspapers such as Sour Esrafil, Hablolmatin and Roholghodos stepped into the Iranian journalism in this date.

Although the ministry of science, court and some moderate parliament members tried to place some restrictions against publishing radical materials of those journals and stop freedom of writing to preserve their own class privileges, the journalists could fulfill their duties in strengthening the fundamentals of freedom, justice and national independence within a short time and leaving valuable collections for future generations by benefiting from peoples' support. The borders and red liens which were placed by the dictators and fanatic groups in form of threatening, destruction and closing newspapers could not force democrat and radical journalists from propagating their believes and push them away from the path of the national interest and pioneer thinking.

The eight-member cabinet was introduced to the Parliament on Thursday, March 20, 1907 and in this way, the dissolution of Ministry of Press was officially approved.

However, not long had passed when Aminol Soltan, Atabak Azam, one of the most powerful enemies of freedom and constitution returned to Iran from Europe upon the invitation of Mohammad Ali shah and in May 1907 was introduced to the parliament as the prime minister.

This made the journalists tasks in keeping the national conscious and knowledge awake much more difficult.

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However, there were four radical newspapers published in the capital city, namely Hablolmatin, Sour Esrafil, Roholghodos Mosavat could find more popularity and strong support by people.

Mojahed (Tabriz), Jihad Akbar (Isfahan), Kheyrolkalam (Rasht), Mozafari (Boushehr),...were among the pioneer and constitutional journals of towns.

Nassim Shomal was published by Seyed Ashrafeddin Gilani nine months before putting fire to the parliament. This literary and satirical newspaper included critical and satire poems and fought alongside the oppressed and deprived people to campaign dictatorship and colonialism. Seyed Ashrafeddin was the most popular and famous national poet of revolution. He was the supporter of society and a true opponent of class difference of society and disliked high classes in any rank and title.

After mentioning close relationship between Mojahedeen of Rasht and the revolutionaries of Caucasia in 1909, Taher Khanov writes: Seyed Ashraf, the editor of Nassim Shomal Newspaper was the pioneer of Mujahedeen with no doubt had some relationship with the Caucasian revolutionaries.....

Nearly twenty years, every week, Nassim Shomal newspaper were printed at the Jews Publication in four chapters in one sheet of paper and distributed. When the newspaper boys shouted for selling newspapers, people gathered from all over places and women, men, old, young, small and big, illiterate or educated used to rush for the newspaper. In the tea shops and passages, where people were gathering, the educated people used to read for the illiterates and people sat around on the floor and heard....the name of newspaper was so famous that Seyed Ashrafeddin Ghazvini, the manager was known by people as Nassim Shomal and everybody called him Nassim Shomal. When the publication days arrived, groups of 10 to 12 years children who distributed the newspapers were gathered to take their shares. Each one of them would take a large bundle of newspapers and leave. They felt proud of selling Nassim Shomal.

Interferences, dispatches and political and economic penetration of Russia and England imperialism around the country led to a kind of dual press and political censor in as much that a few journals which had survived the governmental attachment and Naserolmolk dictatorship system were in risk of attachment by England and Russia and their public interfere. The free and independent journals were suffering the worst types of annoys and tortures. In Khorasan, the Russian troops went so far in invasion to people's right and sacred beliefs that put fire to the Holy Shrine.

Russian Censor in Khorasan: Since the time when hidden agreements of Tsarian Russia and England led to signing treaty 1907 and Iran was generously divided into under influence region, both imperialists were trying to find an excuse to occupy Iran based on a colonialism treaty. The minor dictatorship and the fights of liberty warriors and the coup d'etate government on one hand and the treasons of dictatorship and fanatic government prepared a suitable ground for dispatching forces in north and south Iran.

Britain landed its corps in Persian Gulf and dissolved Boushehr Society. It arrested the constitutionalists of that territory and appointed its missionary, Consulate General as the governor of the region.

The troops of Tsarian government made use of the excuse of breaking Tabriz surrender and guard Russian nationals and in this way, completed the first stages of the treaty 1907 along with the British troops in south.

The presence of these two foreign forces in Iran started a new chapter in the history of invasions and interference of both states as well as surpassing constitution movements. By the beginning of the First World War, these acts spread to central regions of Iran. In the heart of struggles and fights of constitutionalists, Mashhad rose at once and efforts to guard democracy and freedom of writing and expression increased. In the beginning of 1906, Roknoldoleh, a supporter of dictatorship and ruler of Mashhad was put in trouble. At the beginning of next year, the Khorasani warriors and liberals centralized their command office at Goharshad Mosque and sometimes after, a group of Russian Kazakhs arrived Mashhad. In (6 Jamadiolsani 1327 Lunar Hijra (1908) the Mashhadi warriors chose the same way as Bakhtiari Mujaheds, Gilan and Tabriz Fadaies, Iranian liberals, Caucasian, Georgian, Armenian and Jews, put fire on the dictatorship and fought till receiving constitution. However, despite the victory of Mujahedeen and fall of Mohammad Ali Shah, the Russian troops remained in north Iran and upon the Russia's ultimatum, they increased in number. After Atabak Park event, the Russians increased their pressure. Atabak Park was a careful plan of the England-depending noblemen that led to disarmament of true warriors of revolution and unjust take over of national government from the independent liberals, intellectuals and mass of people. This event was the peak of deviation path in constitution movement. The second parliament became established and in Mashhad, like other large cities, the liberals, parties, radicals and journalists started their enlightenment and activities. Democrat party of Khorasan proceeded others and found a large number of force. The Nobahar Newspaper was published by Malekol Shoara Bahar and Hedayat Heydarkhan Amuoghlu in 1910. This newspaper was speaker of democrats in Khorasan and propagated liberty and disguising colonialism and dictatorship.

The Tsarian government who supported dictators of Iran (after the defeat of 1905) and hated democrats dispatched

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troops to Khorasan. The Russians did not like the political method of Nobahar who used to challenge and struggle policies of Russian with utmost brevity and thus, submitted a claim to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via its embassy in Tehran against this Newspaper and forced it to be closed. Despite this, Malekolshoara did not give up fight and published Tazeh Bahar for it.

In this way, Censor of Tsarian government made the whole Khorasan dark and proceeded to stabilize the bloody presence of Tsar's agents in Khorasan to compensate rejection showed by the parliament and resistance of revolutionaries and liberals against the illegitimate demands of that country and its ultimatum.

As the story of Mr. Shuster became hot and upon ultimatum of Russians, massacre in Tabriz and Gilan, dissolution of second parliament and the creeping coup d'etate of Naserolmolk in Mashhad, the grounds of dictatorship expanded as much that the popular Tazeh Bahar Newspaper was closed by the direct order of Russian Council and his editor, along with other liberals, were forced to a new exile.

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